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have developed subsequently in many places, and permitted invasion by plants adapted to growth under acid conditions, a considerable number of the original occupants still persist, and are today classed as "northern" species.

In more southern regions, on the other hand, decomposition usually outstrips disintegration, so that soils containing undecomposed carbonate minerals are relatively rare. Except where limestone outcrops, or where leafmold accumulates, therefore, the dominant soil reactions are inclined to be acid, and the plants, established there since long before the glacial period, have become adapted to growth in such soils. The favoring of circumneutral soils by northern species, and of acid soils by southern ones, is thus connected with the geological history of the respective regions.

WASHINGTON, D. C.

More About Early Days of the American Fern Society.

C. E. WATERS.

In the second number of this JOURNAL for 1919, was an interesting article by E. J. Winslow on "Early Days of the Fern Society." It brought back a host of pleasant memories and made me feel like a historical character. Most historical characters did whatever they became notorious for a long time ago, and they are almost invariably dead ones.

It does seem like a long time since the summer of 1887 when, a boy just out of grammar school, I spent a summer in the Pennsylvania mountains east of Altoona. There a botanist friend showed me that it was possible to become acquainted with the ferns and wild flowers

without the tiresome school lessons in botany over which my sisters groaned. In 1893 my qualifications for membership in the nascent Fern Chapter of the Agassiz Society were not great, and it never entered my head that so many years later my fingers would be busy tapping out these reminiscences. My one fear then was that Mr. Clute might not accept my application for membership, but there need not have been such a fear. It has been my experience that most societies of this sort are only too eager to get new members and their dues, and on one or two occasions our Treasurer has even dunned me for mine.

Proud as we were when our articles appeared in the Bulletin, we did not think that the day would come when libraries and herbaria would try to get complete sets of them, but even that has happened. Then we were greatly pleased when our scientific papers with their labored attempts at "fine writing" appeared on those tiny pages. We may wish now that some of these had not been written, but of the Bulletin as a whole we need not be ashamed. Even if it had contained no contributions of value, it would still have been worth while, for it helped the members to form friendships by correspondence if not by actual acquaintance. It was a place where those who needed help could make known their difficulties and feel pretty sure that somebody could help them. One such question led to working up an analytical key based on the stipes, just to see if it could be done. This led to the unexpected conclusion that the stems are not only very characteristic, but their features are subject to less variation than the leafy parts of the fronds. With practice one can get to recognize stems from which all the pinnae have been stripped, provided the scales are left on.

It has not been my fortune to be acquainted with many of the members, but the memories of three or four

of the older ones who are no longer with us will always be pleasant. Two visits to the home of B. D. Gilbert will not be forgotten, nor will one or two talks with the jovial L. M. Underwood. Somehow it seemed a most surprising thing that Geo. E. Davenport should be an art dealer in Boston. During one visit to his store he spoke of Asa Gray in terms of deep affection, while tears came to his eyes. He was anxious to get a living plant of a glandular form of *Osmunda cinnamomea* which had recently been found near Baltimore. I think my first communication with him was in 1894, a week or two after the appearance of the number of the Botanical Gazette in which he described the new *Dryopteris simulata*. Two months before, in October, I had found great beds of it near Baltimore and, unable to decide between *D. thelypteris* and *D. noveboracensis*, had kept two fronds. One of these was pronounced by Davenport to be typical. With such confirmation there could be no doubt about there being a large colony, perhaps two or three acres in extent, far beyond what might be called the normal range of the species. As to the *Osmunda*, which has been found in New Jersey and Mississippi and must occur elsewhere on the Coastal Plain, Davenport was interested in finding out whether it would retain its glandular pubescence in cultivation. He died the year after the plant was sent to him, so that I never learned about how his plants behaved.

This suggests a word of caution to those who are new students of ferns. It is never a thing amiss for them to have their "finds" verified if the fern they think they have belongs to a difficult genus or is very far out of its recognized range. Even the commonest things are misnamed. One correspondent who agreed to send me several species once forwarded as many different forms of *Athyrium asplenioides* (*filix-foemina*). Recently a correspondent, who with his wife has been in-

terested in ferns for five or six years, sent me a lot of living plants of *Woodsia obtusa* for *W. ilvensis*. Just a look at the stems would have prevented this mistake, for even the manuals mention the obscure joint near the base of the stipe of the latter species.

Things did not always run smoothly, and there were critical moments when some of us hardly knew "where to get off." The detailed account of these moments should remain in the unwritten history of the Society, because peace was made after each period of hostilities, and probably the majority of the members did not know there had been any altercations. Indeed, there are but few members left from the early days. The list of May, 1920, shows just eight who joined in 1895 or before, and only 36 more who came in between that year and the end of 1902. This total of 44 is not a large proportion of the "flourishing society of one hundred or more members" which Mr. Winslow discovered in that year. It is a much smaller proportion of the 264 in the latest list.

WASHINGTON, D. C.

The Ferns of Baltimore and Vicinity.

C. E. WATERS

In this JOURNAL for April-July, 1919, is an account of the ferns of the District of Columbia, by W. R. Maxon. By putting in the proper place names and making some few other changes, his account would do very well for the Baltimore region. The geological features are much the same and the difference in latitude, as well as in altitude, is so slight that there are few species on either list which are not on the other. It will not be necessary, therefore, to repeat all the names but only to point out the differences or to comment on particular species.